

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 00753 171820Z
ACTION NODS-00

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-----032799 171822Z /42
P 171330Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6758

S E C R E T MOSCOW 0753

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, UR, US
SUBJECT: PNG OF DONALD KURSCH

REF: STATE 11051

1. AS OF MIDDAY JAN. 17, THERE HAS BEEN NO FURTHER
SOVIET WORD HERE ON KURSCH CASE. DAS LUERS AND
CHARGE CALLED ON KORNIYENKO FOR ONE-HOUR CONVERSATION
JAN. 16, BUT QUESTION DID NOT ARISE.

2. REGARDING DOBRYNIN'S ARGUMENT (PARA ONE REFTEL)
THAT SOVIETS HAVE NO ADVANTAGE IN NUMBERS OF TRADE
OFFICIALS, ASSUME IT WAS MADE CLEAR TO HIM THAT U.S.
BUSINESSMEN IN MOSCOW ARE COUNTERPARTS OF AMTORG,
KAMA PURCHASING COMMISSION, AEROFLOT AND INTOURISTS, AND
NOT OF SOVIET TRADE REPRESENTATION IN WASHINGTON.
ONLY COUNTERPART TO LATTER IS U.S. COMMERCIAL OFFICE IN
MOSCOW, AS IS MADE CLEAR BY SHULTZ-PATOLICHEV PROTOCOL
OF 1973.

3. DURING SOCIAL FUNCTIONS YESTERDAY BOTH FARRAND AND
KURSCH WERE QUESTIONED BY WORKING-LEVEL OFFICIALS OF
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE REGARDING SIZE, RANK AND
DIPLOMATIC STATUS OF U.S. COMMERCIAL OFFICE. THIS

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CONCEIVABLY MAY INDICATE THAT MFT HAS BEEN APPRISED
OF SITUATION AND IS REVIEWING IMPLICATIONS FOR THEIR
OPERATIONS IN WASHINGTON.

4. GIVEN FACT THAT WE MAY RECEIVE ORDER FOR KURSCH'S
IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE, WE HAVE MADE FOLLOWING CONTINGENCY
PLANS SUBJECT TO DEPARTMENT'S APPROVAL. IF KURSCH

IS IN FACT ORDERED TO LEAVE, WE WOULD SEND HIM TO FRANKFURT UNDER POST-FIRE E&E AUTHORITY. THIS WOULD ALLOW HIM TO REMAIN FORMALLY A MEMBER OF EMBASSY STAFF UNTIL ONWARD ASSIGNMENT IS IDENTIFIED. ONE FACTOR IN HIS PERSONAL SITUATION IS THAT HE MUST REMAIN OVERSEAS UNTIL THE END OF FEBRUARY BEFORE HE WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR HOME LEAVE. HE IS WILLING TO ACCEPT DIRECT TRANSFER TO ANOTHER OVERSEAS POST OR TRANSFER TO DEPARTMENT BUT IN CASE OF LATTER, WOULD PREFER TO REMAIN OVERSEAS UNTIL ELIGIBLE FOR HOME LEAVE. IF HE LEAVES MOSCOW, HIS FAMILY WOULD WISH TO ACCOMPANY HIM, LEAVING SUPERVISION OF HHE PACKING TO FRIENDS AT EMBASSY.

5. AS WE HAVE POINTED OUT BEFORE, IF KURSCH MUST LEAVE, IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CONCEAL THE FACT. IF HIS DEPARTURE SHOULD OCCUR THIS WEEK, IT WILL BE PARTICULARLY OBVIOUS SINCE HE IS THE PRINCIPAL ACTION OFFICER RUNNING THE USCO "GRAFIKA 78," EXHIBIT, WHICH INVOLVES 13 U.S. FIRMS. ALSO, CHARGE IS SCHEDULED FOR REGULAR BACKGROUND PRESS BRIEFING OF U.S. CORRESPONDENTS ON JAN. 20. IF KURSCH HAS DEPARTED BY THEN, QUESTIONS WILL BE INEVITABLE.

6. ALTHOUGH IT IS IN NO SENSE OUR DESIRE TO STIMULATE PUBLICITY ON THIS CASE (PARA 6, STATE 4768, IF KURSCH LEAVES WE ARE GOING TO BE PUT IN A POSITION EITHER OF ATTEMPTING (WITH NO REAL HOPE OF SUCCESS) TO COVER THE MATTER UP OR OF EXPLAINING WHAT HAS HAPPENED. WE THEREFORE
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REQUEST APPROVAL, AS MINIMUM, OF CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES: IF PRESS QUESTIONS ARE RECEIVED

--CONFIRM THAT KURSCH DEPARTED AS THE RESULT OF A SOVIET REQUEST;
-- SAY THAT HE HAS DONE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING WRONG;
-- EXPLAIN THAT THE SOVIET ACTION WAS CLEARLY IN RETALIATION FOR U.S. EXPULSION OF A SOVIET TRADE OFFICIAL FOR CAUSE; AND
-- STATE THAT APPROPRIATE RETALIATORY ACTION IS UNDER CONSIDERATION (OR, PREFERABLY, HAS BEEN TAKEN - IF THIS IS CASE AT THE TIME).

7. IF DEPARTMENT WISHES, WE CAN OF COURSE REFUSE TO PROVIDE NAMES OF SOVIETS INVOLVED, REFERRING QUESTION TO DEPARTMENT. WE MUST POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT NET RESULT COULD BE SERIES OF ARTICLES COVERING SEVERAL DAYS IF PRESS CORPS IN WASHINGTON CONTINUES QUESTIONS AND FURTHER FACTS ARE DRIBBLED OUT IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONING. IT SEEMS TO US FAR PREFERABLE TO PROVIDE WHOLE STORY, IN SIMPLE AND MATTER-OF-FACT FASHION. THIS COULD HARDLY BE CONSTRUED, BY ANY FAIR-MINDED OBSERVER, AS AN ATTEMPT TO STIMULATE PUBLICITY. INDEED, IT IS MORE LIKELY TO INSURE THAT THE

CASE IS PUT IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE FROM THE OUTSET.

8. ACTION REQUESTED:

A. CONFIRMATION OR ALTERATION OF CONTINGENCY
PLAN (PARA 4);

B. CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE.
MATLOCK

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NNN

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